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1
3 RECONSTRUCTING
5 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS
7 USING ‘CORPORATE SOCIAL
9 RESPONSIBILITY’ AS A RESPONSE
11 STRATEGY TO CASES OF
13 CORPORATE IRRESPONSIBILITY:
15 THE CASE OF THE 2010 BP SPILL
17 IN THE GULF OF MEXICO
19

21 Audra R. Diers
23

25 **ABSTRACT**

27 *Purpose — When organisations behave irresponsibly, a question*
29 *remains: Can they use a messaging strategy based in the organisation’s*
31 *commitment social responsibility to effectively respond to the crisis? The*
33 *purpose of this chapter is to analyse stakeholder attitudes and their ante-*
cedents in such a case. Because of its scope, magnitude and use of a
response strategy based on messages of social responsibility, the 2010

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BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico serves as an excellent case for measuring the effectiveness of such a messaging strategy.

Methodology/approach – The present study drew from two data sources: a content analysis of interactions on BP’s Facebook page (N=1,515) as well as an image survey of BP (N=749).

Findings – BP’s messaging strategy had limited positive effects in terms of (1) being viewed as a ‘socially responsible’ organisation and (2) creating significant good will towards the company. However, these data also reveal that BP has effectively opened lines of communication between stakeholders and the company.

Practical and social implications – This study has two central implications. First, for both organisations and activists, personal investment and the relevance of issues are both critical in order to change stakeholder attitudes about organisations. Second, based on this research, we can begin to develop stakeholder profiles based on age, sex and political identity.

Originality/value – In the last couple of years, considerable attention has been paid to describing and analysing the response strategies that organisations deploy; however, scant attention has been paid to measuring stakeholder evaluations of those crisis response strategies.

Keywords: Research chapter; BP; crisis communication; stakeholder evaluation; social construction

Media and industry evaluations of BP’s response to the 2010 spill in the Gulf of Mexico have been largely negative (e.g. Bell, 2012; Shogren, 2011; Warner, 2010; Webb, 2010). Two years after the spill, the company’s stocks have still not returned to their pre-spill value, ‘partly due to a lack of clarity about the scale of the potential damages and penalties the company may face’ (Chazan & Crooks, 2012). The company has been criticised for its leaders’ gaffes, but both applauded and critiqued for its use of social media (Beal, 2010; Shogren, 2011).

Yet, research analysing BP’s central response strategies, leaders’ messaging and communication of remorse (Diers & Donohue, 2011; Diers, Gurien, & Otten, 2011; Diers & Pang, 2011) revealed that during the five-month 2010 crisis, BP’s central response strategy centred on messages of

1 corporate social responsibility (CSR). Specifically, BP emphasised messages
combining self-enhancement, messages to frame the company positively,
3 accommodation as well as excellence in order to send a message that 'they
cared and would make it right'. BP's messaging seemed to be focused on
5 people rather than investors and the media. BP's response strategy seems
to be an effort to define itself as a socially responsible company; however,
7 there have yet to be any significant analyses measuring whether the company
was successful in reconstructing itself as a member of the community.
9 Hearit and Courthright (2003) argue that 'the reality of a crisis is socially
constructed through language... Thus communication is not something
11 that occurs by organisations in crises, but rather something that constitutes
the meaning that participants in that crisis come to hold' (p. 307).

13 The question for BP, as well as any organisation facing a major trans-
gression, is whether grounding its messaging in a CSR-based strategy is
15 appropriate – that is whether organisations in crisis can credibly disseminate
their versions of reality. In the last couple of years, considerable
17 attention has been paid to describing and analysing the response strategies
that organisations deploy (Oles, 2010; Piotrowski & Guyette, 2010; Sam-
19 kin, Allen, & Wallace, 2010, p. 927; Seeger & Griffin-Padgett, 2010; Sung-
Un, Minjeong, & Johnson, 2010; Weber, Erickson, & Stone, 2011); how-
21 ever, scant attention has been paid to measuring stakeholder evaluations
of those crisis response strategies. In fact, there have been only a handful
23 of studies analysing stakeholder evaluations of crises. For example, Claeys,
Cauberghe, and Vyncke's (2010) experiment applying Coombs (2007) situ-
25 ational crisis communication theory (SCCT) found that the type and severity
of the crisis along with a person's locus of control influenced
27 organisational image and strategy preference. This research focused on a
limited variety of response strategies, as SCCT fails to consider the effective-
29 ness of an organisation's efforts to use crisis response as a tool to socially
construct both the organisation and crisis for stakeholders.
31 Another example of a recent study analysing stakeholder evaluations of
crises is Piotrowski and Guyette's (2010) analysis of the Toyota recall
33 focusing on stakeholder evaluations and recall of leadership, brand loyalty
and ethics. These findings provide important information about Toyota's
35 ineffectiveness in managing their crisis but are not theoretically grounded;
it is exploratory. Thus, while issues related to corporate irresponsibility
37 have been analysed, there remains no benchmark for CSR messaging as an
effective tool to socially construct a crisis.

39 The dearth of research on the effectiveness of CSR messaging comes at
a time when organisations are moving towards 'socially responsible'

1 messaging as a cornerstone of their routine and crisis messaging strategies
(Tengblad & Ohlsson, 2010; Uccello, 2009). Theoretical analyses posit that
3 consumers will more positively evaluate companies engaging in socially
responsible activities because the company is viewed as having higher
5 moral standards (Kreng & May-Yao, 2011). Yet, these changes in gover-
nance that promote social and/or ecological sustainability must also be
7 rewarded by financial markets, benchmarked, audited and subject to pub-
lic scrutiny (Frankental, 2001). One of the few studies directly examining
9 the efficacy of a CSR strategy studies in recent years found a significant
relationship between CSR messaging and public intentions to engage in
11 dialogue with the company (Hong, Yang, & Rim, 2010). These findings
suggest that CSR messages positively influenced corporate image, both
13 increasing stakeholder intentions to interact and their identification with
the company. Hong et al.'s (2010) findings also reveal a positive relation-
15 ship between stakeholder identification and behavioural feedback inten-
tions – that is their intent to continue interacting with the company.

17 The oil industry is one of the few industries where research on the
influence of CSR on corporate policy has been conducted. For example,
19 Frynas (2005) found that oil companies are paying increased attention to
the social and environmental implications of their work, are engaging
21 more effectively with local companies and seem to support integrating
CSR into their business models by making organisational changes. In
23 particular, BP is keenly aware of the relationship between being per-
ceived as socially responsible and their reputation, causing them to
25 actively incorporate CSR activities into their business strategy (Anderson
& Bieniaszewska, 2005). This is why the BP case represents an important
27 benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of a company's social con-
struction efforts after a major transgression – BP is an industry facing
29 increasing pressure for socially responsible corporate behaviour, it is a
company that has embraced CSR as a corporate strategy and it is a
31 company that fully deployed the strategy in response to the 2010 spill in
the Gulf of Mexico.

35 RELATIONAL MODEL OF CORPORATE IMAGE 37 ASSESSMENT

39 The present study examines antecedents of BP's image one year after the
crisis in order to assess whether BP was successful in using its language of

social responsibility to construct a more positive image after the 2010 spill. The study is grounded by a relational approach to evaluating corporate image first articulated by Haley (1996) after analysing consumer understanding of advocacy advertising. Haley described advocacy advertising as image advertising focusing on corporations taking 'appropriate stands on key issues' (p. 19) and found that three core relationships described effective and ineffective advocacy messages (see Fig. 1): (1) the relationship between organisations and stakeholders emphasising common values and a positive image; (2) the relationship between organisations and issues focusing on stakeholder evaluations of the company's positive intent and capabilities on the issue and (3) the relationship between stakeholders and the issue itself recognising that issues must be important and actionable to stakeholders if advocacy messages are likely to be effective. The model aligns with previous research establishing that stakeholder characteristics (e.g. Clayes et al., 2010), public pressure from interested stakeholders in the face of corporate irresponsibility (e.g. Piotrowski & Guyette, 2010; Uccello, 2009) and engagement (e.g. Hong et al., 2010) are all likely to influence stakeholder evaluations and behavioural intentions towards organisations.

As a benchmark case, BP's effort to define itself and its efforts after the 2010 spill in the Gulf of Mexico represents an important opportunity to evaluate factors that could influence whether a corporate strategy centred on CSR messaging after significant threat to that strategy's authenticity does affect public stakeholders views of the company and issues. Simply

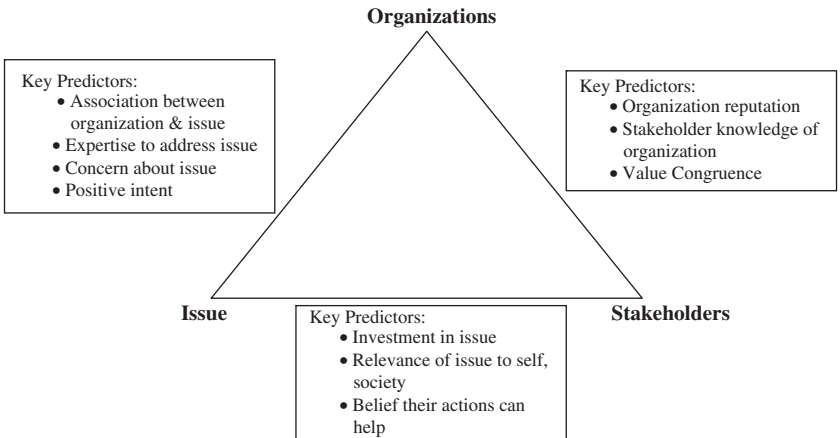


Fig.1. Relational Model of Stakeholder Evaluation of Advocacy Messages.

1 stated, BP has recognised and implemented CSR as an important compo-
2 nent of their corporate strategy since at least 2005 (Anderson & Bienias-
3 zewska, 2005) and that CSR approach was fully deployed in a multimedia
4 response to the 2010 disaster that threatened the company (Diers & Dono-
5 hue, 2011). Now, the questions remain – Is a CSR strategy effective when
6 responding to a major crisis and for whom is the strategy most effective?
7 To that end, I propose the following research questions based on the rela-
8 tional model of corporate image assessment:

9 **Research Question 1:** To what extent does the relationship between BP
10 and the spill influence the relationship between stakeholders and BP?

11 **Research Question 2:** To what extent do stakeholder characteristics,
12 investment with the Gulf spill, relevance of the Gulf spill and perceived
13 ability to affect BP's actions influence the relationship between stake-
14 holders and BP?

15 **Research Question 3:** To what extent do stakeholder characteristics,
16 investment with the Gulf spill, relevance of the Gulf spill and perceived
17 ability to affect BP's actions influence stakeholders' behavioural intent
18 towards BP?

21 METHODS

22
23 The present study triangulates findings by analysing stakeholder engage-
24 ment on BP's Facebook page ($N=1,515$) as well as an image survey of BP
25 ($N=749$). The Facebook messages were coded based on a random selec-
26 tion of the 9th of the month for May, June, July, August and September
27 2011 and coding all of BP's and member posts for those days. Approx-
28 imately 45 people enrolled in an undergraduate advanced methods course
29 were trained for one hour, given a codebook and a portion of the sample
30 to independently code as part of a class project. Ten percent of the sample
31 was coded by an independent coder and project leader to establish the reli-
32 ability of the coding ($\alpha=0.81$).

33 A convenience sample of participants was recruited via email by the
34 same undergraduate advanced methods course. Prospective participants
35 were given a link and asked to complete an anonymous online question-
36 naire. As a result, the sample had a relatively even distribution of men
37 (42%) and women (58%), respondents ranging from 18 and 86 years old
38 with a mean age of approximately 35 years old, were predominantly white
39 (87%) and largely from the northeastern United States (80%).

Variable Operationalisation

To operationalise the relationship between the organisation, spill and stakeholders using Facebook data, coders evaluated each Facebook member posts based on two personal interests communicated and two evaluations of BP. Member posts were analysed to look for a communication of personal interest in the Gulf coast – that is whether the member shared information like whether they lived, worked, vacationed, knew people in the region or felt so strongly about the issue that they seemed like they could be an activist. The other personal interest identified was their level of environmental interest based on their communication of the importance of environmental protection or issues. Each of these assessments was based on a rating from 1 to 7 (very low to very high). If the comment was unrelated to the variable, that was also noted.

In evaluating Facebook member attitudes towards BP, two other variables were coded on a 1–7 scale ranging from very negative to very positive. First, BP's image was coded based on the tone and content of the message about the company. Second, BP's connection to the Gulf coast was evaluated based on identification of assertions about whether BP cares about the Gulf coast, recovery and/or the spill. As with the personal interests, if the comment was unrelated that was also noted.

Using Haley's (1996) conceptualisation of advocacy advertising as the basis for assessing the key recovery relationships after a crisis, the survey analysed the influence of stakeholder characteristics, investment in the spill, relevance of the issue, and assessment of whether BP's actions can be influenced on measures of the relationships between organisation and issue as well as stakeholders and the organisation. Since this study includes new measures and operationalisations based on Haley's findings, Table 1 summarises the operationalisation of variables in this study. Exploratory principal components factor analyses with Varimax rotation were used to evaluate relevant items for each of the types of relationships tested. Emergent factors were then evaluated using Chronbeck's alpha for scale reliability.

Stakeholder characteristics were operationalised in three ways: age, gender and political identity. Age and gender were included both because there was a significant correlation between gender and environmental interest in the Facebook data ($r = -0.06$; $p < 0.05$). Political identity (i.e. conservatism vs. liberalism) was included because identity and the socio-political context has previously been identified as important influencers for organisational discourse (Finet, 2001; Mumby, 2001; Uccello, 2009).

Table 1. Operationalisation of Study Variables.

Relationship Tested	Variable	Questions	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Alpha
Stakeholder to Gulf spill	Age	Age reported	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Gender	Gender reported	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Political identity	Tea party	3.88	64.66	0.84
		Libertarian party			
		Republican party			
		Democratic party ^a			
		Green party ^a			
		Socialist party ^a			
	Relevance of issue	Personal relevance	1.40	69.81	N/A
	Ability to influence	Relevance to Americans			
		Personal action	1.81	59.14	N/A
BP to Gulf spill	Investment in spill	USFG action	3.06	76.47	0.90
		Knowledge of BP			
		Knowledge of spill			
	Ethic of CSR	Information seeking			
		Accurately describe BP's response			
		BP setting good example for industry	6.84	45.61	0.88
		BP demonstrates dedication to change			
		BP demonstrates commitment to communities			
	Commitment to clean-up	BP is trustworthy			
		BP is engaged in the community			
BP is focused on community responsibility		6.84	45.61	0.87	
BP communicates genuine concern					
BP is self-serving	BP committed to fully restoring Gulf coast				
	BP's actions are sincere				
	BP's actions are self-serving ^a	1.03	6.84	0.76	
		BP's actions are only to manage their image ^a			

1 Stakeholders' relationship between themselves and the spill was mod-
 3 elled after Haley's (1996) findings that the importance of the issue to them-
 5 selves and society as well as stakeholder beliefs that their actions can help
 7 are key determinants of that relationship. It was assessed based on evalua-
 tions of the stakeholder investment, spill's relevance and ability to influ-
 ence the crisis. These variables were assessed with 15 items and a total of
 four subscales.

Finally, the antecedents' influence was measured against stakeholder
 behavioural intentions towards BP. Although Haley's (1996) evaluation of
 the relationship between organisations and stakeholders focused on identi-
 fying the reputation, knowledge and value congruence of the organisation
 and stakeholders as important factors, these can be easily conceptually
 confused with stakeholder assessments of the company's relationship to the
 issue; therefore, as more direct measures of stakeholder assessments of rep-
 utation, their behavioural intent was evaluated. In campaign and persua-
 sion research, behavioural intent is used as an important indicator of the
 effectiveness of a campaign's effectiveness (Yang, Liu, & Zhou, 2012).
 Because my goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of BP's CSR-based strat-
 egy, behavioural intent towards the company is a more direct measure of
 the relationship between stakeholders and BP. Intent was evaluated with
 two single-item measures of directly working to avoid buying gas at BP
 stations and more generally boycotting BP. Additionally, intent was mea-
 sured in terms of stakeholders' willingness to advocate against BP.

Analysis Methods

In order to evaluate each of the research questions, correlations and hierar-
 chical regression analyses were used. First, a correlation analysis was per-
 formed in order to identify relationships between variables. Second,
 hierarchical multiple regression were performed to test the relationships.
 Collinearity tests revealed no significant multicollinearity problems.

RESULTS

Broadly, these results demonstrate that a relational approach to evaluating
 CSR is a useful theoretical model indicating that relationships between sta-
 keholders, issues and organisations are likely to influence the effectiveness

of an organisation's CSR messaging (see Table 2). More directly, these results suggest that while negative evaluations of BP were not particularly high one year after the 2010 spill in the Gulf of Mexico, BP has not yet persuaded stakeholders that it is a company that values CSR.

Influence of the Issue

Research questions one and two focused on the influence of the issue after a crisis, which is a moment of corporate irresponsibility. Findings for research question one (see Table 3) indicate that the more likely that BP was perceived as caring about the spill in the Gulf, the higher BP's image was among Facebook users interacting on BP's Facebook page $t(647) = 30.82$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$.

Findings for research question two (see Tables 4–7) indicate that stakeholder characteristics, the relationship between stakeholders and the spill, and their perceived ability to influence BP's actions all consistently influence evaluations of the relationship between BP and the spill itself. Together, these findings indicate that political identity and investment are the two variables with the greatest overall influence on this relationship.

Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on perceptions that BP's intentions in the Gulf are corrupt. Overall, while stakeholders' assessment of BP is slightly positive ($M = 3.84$), stakeholder characteristics, their investment, the relevance of the spill and the perceived ability to influence BP's actions predict approximately 10% of the variance in the relationship (see Table 4).

Stakeholder characteristics exercised the greatest influence on this measure. These data suggest that younger stakeholders are more likely to view BP as corrupt (adjusted $R^2 = 0.04$) and that the more conservative the stakeholder, the more likely to view BP as corrupt (adjusted $R^2 = 0.04$). Personal investment with the issue and its relevance each predicted about 1% of the variance. The greater the investment, the more likely respondents were to believe BP was corrupt. Similarly, the more personally relevant the spill was, the more likely BP was evaluated as corrupt, though in the final model, personal relevance was not significant. Finally, the more that stakeholders believed the USFG could influence BP's actions, the greater the perception that BP was corrupt (adjusted $R^2 = 0.01$).

Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on perceptions that BP's intentions in the Gulf are self-serving. Overall, while assessments of BP suggest a moderate belief that BP is self-serving ($M = 4.40$), stakeholder

Table 2. Correlations for Survey Responses.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Gender	—														
2. Conservatism	0.05	—													
3. Age	0.08*	-0.09*	—												
4. Investment	-0.19**	0.01	0.07	—											
5. Relevance: Personal	0.16**	0.08*	0.15**	0.17**	—										
6. Relevance: Americans	0.09**	0.03	0.20**	0.09*	0.40**	—									
7. Response efficacy: Personal	0.10**	-0.00	-0.02	0.08*	0.30**	0.17**	—								
8. Response efficacy: USFG	0.05	0.03	-0.01	0.14**	0.24**	0.37**	0.18**	—							
9. BI: Avoid BP gas stations	-0.10**	0.19**	-0.09*	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.07	-0.08*	-0.07	—						
10. BI: Boycott BP	0.14**	0.28**	0.03	0.11**	0.27**	0.20**	0.09*	0.27**	-0.49**	—					
11. BI: Advocate against BP	0.10**	0.27**	-0.09*	0.20**	0.27**	0.15**	0.27**	0.22**	-0.34**	0.63**	—				
12. BP corrupt	-0.06	0.22**	-0.21	0.09**	0.07*	0.04	0.02	0.10**	-0.38**	0.39**	0.28**	—			
13. BP self-serving	-0.08*	0.22**	-0.07	0.21**	0.09**	0.12**	-0.05	0.17**	-0.40**	0.41**	0.31**	0.54**	—		
14. BP quality action in Gulf	-0.02	-0.30**	0.04	0.07*	-0.04	0.07*	0.11**	0.09*	0.37**	-0.35**	-0.21**	-0.39**	-0.42**	—	
15. BP commitment to clean-up	-0.01	-0.23**	0.06	-0.04	-0.03	0.11**	0.10**	0.07*	0.39**	-0.35**	-0.24**	-0.41**	-0.45**	0.78**	—

N = 781; *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the .01 level.

Table 3. Correlations for Facebook.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	— <i>n</i> = 1,482				
2. Personal investment in Gulf	− 0.01 <i>n</i> = 1,390	— <i>n</i> = 1,411			
3. Environmental interest	− 0.06* <i>n</i> = 1,384	0.64** <i>n</i> = 1,397	—		
4. Image of BP	− 0.02 <i>n</i> = 717	− 0.04 <i>n</i> = 703	− 0.05 <i>n</i> = 707	—	
5. BP cares about the Gulf	0.02 <i>n</i> = 677	0.00 <i>n</i> = 672	− 0.07 <i>n</i> = 673	0.77** <i>n</i> = 649	—

N = 1,515; *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level.

characteristics, their investment, the spill's relevance and the perceived ability to influence BP's actions predict approximately 11% of the variance in the relationship (see Table 5).

Stakeholder characteristics (adjusted $R^2=0.05$) and investment (adjusted $R^2=0.04$) were the most powerful predictors of this perception. These data suggest that men were more likely to view BP as being self-serving with clean-up efforts. Further, conservatives were more likely to view BP's efforts as self-serving. The greater the personal investment in the issue, the more stakeholders believed BP's efforts were self-serving. While the relevance of the spill to respondents and Americans were significant when first introduced into the regression model, in the final model, they were not. Finally, the perceived ability of the USFG to positively influence BP's actions lead to conclusions that BP's actions were self-serving (adjusted $R^2=0.01$).

Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on perceptions that BP's intentions in the Gulf are rooted in an ethic of CSR. Overall, while not a strong negative feeling, respondents do not believe BP's actions are grounded by CSR ($M=3.31$). Political identity (adjusted $R^2=0.09$) and the perception that the USFG has positively influenced BP's actions (adjusted $R^2=0.01$) most influenced respondents' perceptions (see Table 6, adjusted $R^2=0.11$).

Though personal investment in the Gulf issue and the perceived relevance of the spill to Americans were significant when introduced into the model initially, once the perceived ability of the USFG to affect BP's actions positive was introduced, they were no longer influential. These data

Table 4. Regression Model for Corruption Measure.

Regressor	Beta	Model 1 SE	<i>t</i>	Beta	Model 2 SE	<i>t</i>	Beta	Model 3 SE	<i>t</i>	Beta	Model 4 SE	<i>t</i>	Beta	Model 5 SE	<i>t</i>
Intercept		0.13	34.54		0.22	16.14		0.24	13.49		0.25	12.22		.29	9.53
Age	-0.21	0.00	-5.95 ***	-0.20	0.00	-5.55 ***		0.00	-5.78 ***	-0.21	0.00	-6.04 ***	-0.21	.00	-5.95 ***
Conservatism				0.21	0.05	5.97		0.20	5.95 ***	0.20	0.05	5.72 ***	.20	.05	5.71 ***
Investment							0.11	0.04	3.13 **	0.10	0.04	2.76 **	.09	.04	2.54 *
Spill relevance:										0.07	0.03	2.12 *	.06	.03	1.58
Personal															
Response													.08	.03	2.19 *
efficacy:															
USFG															
<i>F</i>	35.37 ***			36.31 ***			27.74 ***			22.02 ***			18.66 ***		
ΔF				35.67			9.78			4.49			4.80		
<i>R</i> ²	0.04			0.09			0.10			0.10			.11		
<i>R</i> ² _{adj}	0.04			0.08			0.09			0.10			.10		
<i>R</i> ² change				0.04			0.01			0.01			.01		
<i>df</i>	1,779			1,778			1,777			1,776			1,775		

p* < 0.05, *p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001.

Table 5. Regression Model for Self-Serving Measure.

Regressor	Model 1		<i>t</i>	Model 2		<i>t</i>	Model 3		<i>t</i>	Model 4		<i>t</i>	Model 5		<i>t</i>
	Beta	SE		Beta	SE		Beta	SE		Beta	SE		Beta	SE	
Intercept		0.17	28.05		0.22	17.80		0.25	12.73		0.28	9.63		.29	8.40
Gender	−0.08	0.10	−2.27*	−0.09	0.10	−2.66**	−0.06	0.10	−1.60	−0.07	0.10	−1.96*	−.07	.10	−2.04*
Conservatism				0.22	0.04	6.30***	0.22	0.04	6.30	0.21	0.04	6.22***	.21	.04	6.21***
Investment							0.20	0.03	5.77	.19	0.03	5.27***	.18	.03	4.96***
Spill relevance:										0.02	0.03	.45	.01	.03	.15
Personal															
Spill relevance:										0.10	0.03	2.59**	.06	.04	1.45
Americans															
Response efficacy:													.12	.03	3.34***
USFG															
<i>F</i>	5.15*			22.55***			26.74***			18.01***			17.06***		
ΔF				39.70			33.25			4.55			11.13		
<i>R</i> ²	0.01			0.06			0.09			0.10			.12		
<i>R</i> ² _{adj.}	0.01			0.05			0.09			0.10			.11		
<i>R</i> ² change				0.05			0.04			0.01			.01		
<i>df</i>		1,780		1,779			1,778			2,776			1,775		

p* < 0.05, *p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001.

suggest that liberals were more likely to view BP's actions as being rooted in an ethic of CSR; further, the greater that the perception the USFG affected BP, the more that respondents believed BP's actions were rooted in CSR.

Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on perceptions that BP is committed to clean-up. Overall, while not a strong negative feeling, respondents do not believe BP is committed to clean-up in the Gulf of Mexico ($M = 3.68$). Political identity, investment in the Gulf, the spill's relevance to Americans and the ability to influence BP's actions predict approximately 7% of the variance (see Table 7).

Liberals were more likely to view BP as being committed to clean-up (adjusted $R^2 = 0.05$). The more that respondents believed the spill was relevant to Americans, the more likely BP was perceived as being committed to clean-up. Finally, the more the USFG was perceived as able to influence BP, the more that BP was evaluated as committed to clean-up.

Behavioural Intent towards BP

Research question three evaluated three measures of behavioural intent regarding BP: stakeholders' intent to avoid buying gas from BP stations, their intent to boycott BP more generally and their intent to advocate against BP. These findings suggest that stakeholder characteristics, investment with the issue, relevance of the issue and perceived ability to affect BP were all significant predictors.

Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on their intent to avoid buying gas from BP stations. Overall, respondents indicated they were moderately planning to avoid buying gas from BP ($M = 4.66$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.10$). Stakeholder characteristics, investment in the Gulf issue and perceived personal relevance of the spill all influenced behavioural intent (see Table 8).

All three measures of stakeholder characteristics significantly influenced this variable (adjusted $R^2 = 0.05$). Male, older and liberal respondents were all more likely to be willing to avoid BP stations. However, the more invested the respondent was in the issue, the less likely they were to avoid using BP gas stations (adjusted $R^2 = 0.04$). There was a similar negative relationship between the personal relevance of the spill and intent to avoid BP gas stations. The perceived ability to affect BP's actions was not a significant predictor.

Table 6. Regression Model for BP’s Actions Rooted in CSR Measure.

Regressor	Beta	<i>t</i>	Model 1 SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	Model 2 SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	Model 3 SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	Model 4 SE
Intercept			0.13	33.14		0.16	27.07		0.21	18.98		.22
Conservatism	−0.30	−8.64***	0.04	−0.30	−8.69***	0.04	−0.30	−8.76***	0.04	−0.30	−8.83***	.04
Investment				0.08	2.20*	0.03	0.07	2.00*	0.03	0.06	1.64	.03
Spill relevance:							0.08	2.19*	0.03	0.04	1.03	.03
Americans												
Response efficacy:										0.06	1.64	.03
Personal												
Response efficacy:										0.09	2.60**	.02
USFG												
<i>F</i>	74.68***			39.94***			28.36***			19.34***		
ΔF				4.83			4.82			5.35		
<i>R</i> ²	0.09			0.09			0.10			0.11		
<i>R</i> ² _{adj.}	0.09			0.09			0.10			0.11		
<i>R</i> ² change				0.01			0.01			0.01		
<i>df</i>	1,780			1,779			1,778			2,776		

p* < 0.05, *p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001.

Table 7. Regression Model for BP Committed to Clean-Up Measure.

Regressor	Beta	Model 1 SE	t	Beta	Model 2 SE	t	Beta	Model 3 SE	t
Intercept		0.15	30.70		0.22	18.45***		0.24	16.16
Conservatism	-0.23	0.04	-6.61***	-0.23	0.04	-6.75***	-0.23	0.04	-6.77***
Spill relevance: Americans					0.03	3.48***		0.03	2.56**
Response efficacy: Personal				0.12			0.03	0.03	0.84
Response efficacy: USFG							0.07	0.03	2.06*
F	43.74***			28.22***			15.54***		
ΔF				12.08			2.74		
R ²	0.05			0.07			0.07		
R ² _{adj.}	0.05			0.07			0.07		
R ² change				0.01			0.01		
df	1,780			1,779			2,777		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 8. Regression Model for Behavioural Intent: Avoid Buying Gas from BP Stations.

Regressor	Beta	Model 1	t	Beta	Model 2	t	Beta	Model 3	t	Beta	Model 4	t
		SE			SE			SE			SE	
Intercept		0.30	16.59		0.37	16.38		0.40	17.69		.40	18.22
Gender	-0.10	0.16	-2.86**	-.09	0.15	-2.59**	-0.13	0.15	-3.78***	-0.11	.15	-3.08**
Age	0.10	0.01	2.79**	0.08	0.01	2.36*	0.10	0.01	2.92**	0.12	.01	3.42***
Conservatism				-0.18	0.07	-5.07***	-0.17	0.06	-4.99***	-0.16	.06	-4.68***
Investment							-0.21	0.05	-6.02***	-0.18	.05	-5.22***
Spill relevance:										-0.14	.04	-3.84***
Personal												
F	7.43***			13.68***			19.79***			19.06***		
ΔF				25.72			36.26			14.74		
R ²	0.02			0.05			0.09			0.11		
R ² _{adj.}	0.02			0.05			0.09			0.10		
R ² change				0.03			0.04			0.02		
df	2,780			3,780			4,780			5,780		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

1 *Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on their intent to boycott BP.* There was an important conceptual difference for stakeholders
3 between avoiding buying gas and more generally boycotting BP as identified in these findings (see Table 9). While the desire to boycott was not
5 strong ($M=4.43$, adjusted $R^2=0.19$), the tested antecedents did substantially influence that behavioural intent.

7 Stakeholder characteristics (adjusted $R^2=0.09$), investment in the spill (adjusted $R^2=0.02$), perceived personal relevance of the spill (adjusted
9 $R^2=0.05$) and perceived ability to influence BP's actions (adjusted $R^2=0.03$) were the most important predictors for the intent to boycott BP.
11 In this case, women were more likely to boycott BP. Political identity accounted for about 7% of the variance on its own with a positive relationship
13 between conservative identity and the intent to boycott BP. Additionally, the greater the personal investment with the spill, the more likely
15 respondents were to support boycotting BP. Third, the greater the personal relevance of the Gulf spill, the more likely respondents reported being willing
17 to boycott BP. Finally, the greater the perceived USFG influence on BP, the more likely that respondents were to support boycotting BP.

19 *Influence of stakeholder's relationship to the issue on their intent to advocate against BP.* While respondents indicated a moderately low level of
21 intent to advocate against BP ($M=3.39$), stakeholder characteristics, investment in the spill, relevance of the spill and perceived ability to influence
23 BP significantly affected respondents' intent to advocate against BP predicting over one-fifth of the variance (see Table 10).

25 These data suggest that all three measures of stakeholder characteristics influence respondent intentions to advocate against BP one year after the
27 Gulf spill (adjusted $R^2=0.08$). Women were more likely to report willingness to advocate against BP. Younger respondents were also more likely to
29 report willingness to advocate against BP. However, the greatest influence was political identity (adjusted $R^2=0.07$) with conservatives reporting the
31 greatest willingness to advocate against BP. In addition, the greater level of personal investment with the spill, the more willingness respondents
33 reported for advocating against BP (adjusted $R^2=0.05$). Personal relevance of the spill and the relevance to Americans in general both significantly
35 influenced willingness to advocate against BP (adjusted $R^2=0.05$); however, in the final model, relevance to Americans was not significant.
37 Finally, the belief that BP's actions could be influenced significantly predicted whether respondents were willing to advocate against BP (adjusted
39 $R^2=0.04$) with significant positive relationships for both personal influence as well as the USFG's influence.

Table 9. Regression Model for Behavioural Intent: Boycott BP.

Regressor	Beta	t	Model 1 SE	Beta	t	Model 2 SE	Beta	t	Model 3 SE	Beta	t	Model 4 SE	Beta	t	Model 5 SE
Intercept			0.26	13.44		0.26	5.53		0.37	2.80		0.42	-.09		.43
Gender	0.14	4.04***	0.16		0.13	0.15	3.76***	0.15	0.15	4.47***	0.11	0.15	3.21***	.11	.15
Conservatism					0.27	0.06	7.86***	0.27	0.06	7.84***	0.25	0.06	7.62***	.25	.06
Investment								0.14	0.05	3.97***	0.09	0.05	2.62***	.07	.05
Spill relevance: Personal											0.17	0.04	4.64***	.16	.04
Spill relevance: Americans											0.11	0.05	3.14**	.05	.05
Response efficacy: Personal														-.02	.04
Response efficacy: USFG														.19	.05
F	16.33***			39.66***			32.20***			30.35***				26.80***	
ΔF				61.72			15.77			24.64				15.15	
R ²	0.02			0.09			0.11			0.16				.20	
R ² _{adj.}	0.02			0.09			0.11			0.16				.19	
R ² change				0.07			0.02			0.05				.03	
df	1,780			1,779			1,778			2,776				2,774	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 10. Regression Model for Behavioural Intent: Advocate against BP.

Regressor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t
	SE		SE		SE		SE		SE	
Intercept	0.23	13.94	0.28	6.71	0.31	3.32	0.33	1.40	.34	-.22
Gender	0.10	2.85**	0.12	2.47*	0.13	3.75***	0.12	2.60**	.07	.11
Age	-.010	-.280**	0.00	-.2.21*	-.0.10	-.2.81**	0.00	-.3.95***	-.11	-.3.24***
Conservatism			0.05	7.51***	0.25	7.50***	0.05	7.09***	.24	.05
Investment					0.22	6.45***	0.18	5.22***	.16	.04
Spill relevance:							0.03	5.42***	.14	.03
Personal										
Spill relevance:							0.07	1.87	.02	.42
Americans										
Response efficacy:									.18	.03
Personal										5.27***
Response efficacy:									.12	.04
USFG										3.36***
F	7.41***		24.09***		29.42***		28.41***		27.79***	
ΔF			56.41		41.60		23.07		21.41	
R ²	0.02		0.09		0.13		0.18		.22	
R ² _{adj.}	0.02		0.08		0.13		0.17		.22	
R ² change			0.07		0.05		0.05		.04	
df	2,778		1,777		1,776		2,774		2,772	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to use a relational model of impression management to evaluate two questions: Is a CSR-centred strategy effective when responding to a major crisis and for whom is it most effective? Aside from answering these questions, the findings demonstrate that a relational model of corporate image assessment, grounded in Haley's (1996) work on advocacy advertising (see Fig. 1), can effectively predict antecedents and outcomes associated with organisational advocacy. The model supports previous crisis research emphasising that crisis response is a contextually bound phenomenon (Carroll, 2009) and meaningfully develops our theoretical knowledge of the relationships between emergent issues (e.g. examples of corporate (ir)responsibility), organisations and stakeholder assessments. Applied in this case, the model affords us the opportunity to better evaluate an organisation's ability to construct a preferred reality after a crisis using CSR-based messaging.

CSR Messaging, Limited Social Construction

Does CSR messaging construct a compelling reality after a major crisis? The answer to this question largely depends on BP's strategic goals. Previous research indicated that BP has long viewed CSR as an important component in their corporate strategy (Anderson & Bieniaszewska, 2005), with analyses of BP's response to the 2010 Gulf spill conclusively demonstrating that CSR-based messaging grounded BP's crisis response strategy (e.g. Diers & Donohue, 2011). If BP's goal was to be viewed as a socially responsible corporation one year after the spill, then these data suggest that BP's objective largely failed. The company's response to the spill is viewed as being moderately self-serving, moderately unlikely to be rooted in an ethic of CSR and moderately negatively committed to clean-up in the Gulf of Mexico. One weakness of this data is that there is no direct measure of BP's image in 2010 during or after the spill as a point of comparison for these findings. Repeating this assessment in the future could better evaluate if BP's image has changed and in which direction.

Similarly, if a goal of CSR messaging is to create good will towards the company, particularly in the face of a transgression, it also seems like BP has failed in this respect as well. These data suggest that behavioural intent

1 is still negative towards BP as demonstrated by the respondents' moderate
2 intent to either avoid buying gas from BP stations or boycott BP more
3 generally. Because these two actions were predicted by opposite stake-
4 holder characteristics (i.e. men, older respondents and liberals were more
5 likely to be willing to avoid buying gas from BP stations and women and
6 conservatives were more likely to be willing to boycott BP more generally),
7 we can conclude that most people still view their relationship with BP as a
8 negative.

9 Through these conclusions, it is important to note that there are some
10 seemingly contradictory findings. For example, evaluations that when sta-
11 keholders perceive the US government as effectively influencing BP's
12 actions, BP is viewed as significantly more self-serving paired with the
13 finding that some stakeholders believe BP's actions are rooted in an ethic
14 of CSR or even more clearly the findings that personal relevance of the
15 issue can have both a positive and negative relationship with stake-
16 holders' willingness to boycott BP. Given the strong influences of gender,
17 age and political identity for each of these findings, I would argue that
18 these findings demonstrate a limitation in the effectiveness of any
19 response strategy – identity politics. In the United States, identity politics
20 is ruling – in fact, Americans are probably more divided along gender,
21 age and political identification now than at any point in the last three
22 decades (Debevec, 2012). As such an influential component of the socio-
23 political environment, it helps to explain these seemingly contradictory
24 findings and demonstrate a significant limitation for any crisis response
25 strategy.

The silver lining for BP. There may, however, be a silver lining as we
27 evaluate BP's use of CSR as a response strategy. Though the relationships
28 between BP and the Gulf of Mexico and stakeholders and BP are still gen-
29 erally negative, these data suggest there are three relatively positive out-
30 comes for BP one year after the spill. First, the Facebook data have two
31 important implications. Initially, there are a lot of people engaging BP on
32 Facebook, confirming Hong et al.'s (2010) analysis that a CSR strategy
33 can lead to important dialogue between a company and its stakeholders.
34 Thus, while BP may not have created a new reality on its own, its consis-
35 tent use of CSR as a messaging strategy seems to have opened the lines of
36 communication between stakeholders and the company. That dialogue
37 may lay the groundwork for an increasingly positive relationship between
38 various stakeholder groups and BP in the future. Further, the analysis of
39 member comments on Facebook indicates that when members perceive
that BP cares about the spill in the Gulf, it predicts they will view BP more

1 positively almost 60% of the time. That direct relationship between the
perception of BP caring and a positive image suggests that when BP suc-
3 cessfully persuades stakeholders they care, the relationship between the sta-
keholders and the company is going to improve.

5 The second positive indicator for BP and the utility of CSR as a mes-
sage strategy is that one year after the spill, most respondents did not view
7 BP as a fundamentally corrupt organisation. Though BP struggles with
particular groups (i.e. younger participants and conservatives), these find-
9 ings suggest that the negative association with BP is likely less about the
fundamental character of the company and more about the evidence of
11 their actions. In this way, BP was able to influence stakeholders' under-
standing of the company's character. Applying Haley's (1996) findings,
13 these data suggest that while the BP's reputation is still negatively affected,
it is not viewed as having values that are largely incongruous with most
15 respondents. This suggests that the reputational problem can yet be
addressed.

17 Finally, whilst stakeholders are still wary of patronising BP, these data
suggest that most respondents were unlikely to be interested in actively
19 advocating against BP one year after the spill. This, in combination with
the dialogue evident on BP's Facebook page, is an indication that BP's
21 CSR-based response strategy may have minimised the outrage towards BP.
Though these data would indicate this may be true, I am wary about the
23 causal connection between CSR and the interest in advocating against BP
because of factors not tested in this study. For example, within one year
25 after the spill, the environmental and economic effects of it seem to have
been minimised. Thus, future research should analyse the influence of 'pro-
27 blems solved' as a mediating factor influencing the relationship between
messaging and willingness to advocate against an organisation that has
29 been irresponsible.

Overall implications of a CSR strategy. As one of the few direct mea-
31 sures of the use of CSR, these data suggest that while it may not be a
solution to reputational problems, it may be strategically useful for an
33 organisation trying to persuade stakeholders that it is a good company
despite the transgression. Repeated measures of the changes in stake-
35 holders' attitudes towards a company would substantially validate these
findings. Absent the evaluations of changes in these outcome variables,
37 these data can only describe the outcomes of BP's CSR-based response
one year after the end of the Gulf spill. Yet, these cross-sectional data
39 do suggest that there are reputational and dialogic benefits to this
approach.

1 *Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of CSR as a Crisis Response Strategy*

3 By applying the relational model of corporate image assessment, we can better understand what influences both stakeholder evaluations of the quality
5 of an organisation's actions as well as their behavioural intentions towards the organisation. These data suggest that the stakeholder's relationship to
7 the issue and the organisation reveal new information about the effectiveness of CSR as a crisis response strategy. Equally important, these data tell
9 a consistent story about who may be most susceptible to a company's use of the CSR crisis strategy. Thus, one of the strongest contributions this
11 research makes is beginning to identify a profile of stakeholder characteristics, values and activism that should be pursued in future research.

13 *Moderator variables.* Moderator variables strengthen the direction or relationship between other independent variables and the dependent variables. Therefore, because personal investment – that is stakeholders' interest, information seeking behaviours and perceived knowledge about the
15 issue – and the relevance of the issue to the stakeholder were consistently significant regardless of other stakeholder characteristic variables (i.e. they
17 were significant regardless of the direction of the political identify, gender or age variables), these two variables are likely moderator variables in
19 assessing the relationship between organisations, stakeholders and issues. For example, if we compare the findings from research question two assessing
21 stakeholder intentions to avoid buying gas from BP and the willingness to advocate against BP, we find the exact opposite stakeholder
23 characteristics predicting these behavioural intentions and similar influence of investment and relevance. Specifically, older, male and liberal stakeholders
25 were more willing to avoid buying gas from BP stations where younger, female and conservative stakeholders were more willing to advocate
27 against BP; yet, on both measures, investment and relevance were significant predictors as well.

31 These findings indicate for those populations interested in taking action for or against an organisation, investment and perceived relevance only
33 strengthen those interests. Yet, in this moderator relationship is an opportunity for CSR messaging to affect the relationship because information-
35 seeking behaviour is an essential component to investment. If an organisation is successful in reaching out to populations depending on their interests,
37 then they have the opportunity to strengthen or even change the relationship between the stakeholders and organisation.

39 *Stakeholder profiles.* These data also suggest that understanding key stakeholder characteristics will help organisations reliably predict the

1 probability that CSR messaging will be effective. Age and sex are certainly
3 important demographic considerations for organisations trying to manage
5 relationships, especially because younger demographics and women are
7 much more likely to adopt an activist identity against organisations that
9 have committed a transgression violating the public trust. In particular,
11 younger demographics are more likely to view multinational corporations
13 as corrupt organisations indicating CSR strategies may be less effective in
15 changing the company's reputation.

17 However, the most striking finding was for the influence of political
19 identity on assessments of BP's image and stakeholder behavioural inten-
21 tions towards the company. The central arguments that BP made in
23 their CSR messaging during the Gulf spill and in the year after were
25 that they cared about the Gulf and its people (i.e. they had adopted an
27 ethic of CSR) and were committed to fully restoring the Gulf. These
29 data clearly suggest that liberals were more likely to view BP as adopt-
31 ing a CSR ethic and being committed to clean-up, suggesting that the
33 messaging strategy was significantly more successful among liberals.
35 Conversely, conservatives consistently evaluated BP more negatively. The
37 negative evaluations seemed to be amplified with the perceived influence
of the USFG on BP's actions. That is, for conservatives who were
already inclined to evaluate BP negatively, when these respondents per-
ceived BP as being swayed by the federal government's demands on the
company, they evaluated BP even more negatively. For those who have
followed American politics in the last several years, these findings are
not surprising because they support a dominant theme communicated in
the American conservative media – that taking money away from stock-
holders and cooperating with the democratic president are fundamental
violations of 'conservative' values in the United States. These findings
suggest that political dogmatism may make some stakeholders more sus-
ceptible to CSR messaging, likewise others less susceptible to CSR mes-
saging. Future research should validate these conclusions with different
organisations and contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

There are two major contributions that this piece makes examining the
effectiveness of the CSR strategy as a tool of crisis social construction after
a major transgression. First, these data suggest that while strategies centred

on social/environmental responsibility are not a panacea for transgressors, the CSR strategy is likely to improve dialogue between stakeholders and the organisation and separate evaluations of the transgression from the fundamental character of the organisation. These outcomes will likely help organisations move forward from irresponsible actions. Yet, organisations must create realistic objectives if they use CSR messaging as an integral part of their crisis response.

Second, the BP case confirms the utility of the relational model of image assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR strategies. In so doing, these data reveal four important conclusions that should not only help develop future research but organisations to better apply CSR messaging to appropriate stakeholder groups. Initially, these data contributed to the conceptualisation of the relational model of image assessment by focusing on behavioural intentions as a key indicator of the relationship between stakeholders and the organisation. By doing so, it more effectively conceptually separates this relationship from reputational assessments of the organisation's actions. Second, these findings indicate that stakeholder characteristics are critical determinants of the relationships between stakeholders, organisations and emergent issues. Future research should focus on creating a more comprehensive typology of stakeholder characteristics that increase susceptibility to CSR messaging. Third, in line with Haley's (1996) arguments, perceived value congruence between stakeholders and organisations is an essential variable to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR messaging. This study only assessed political identity; however, that was the most consistently powerful predictor of respondent perceptions of BP. Future research needs to continue to identify important value congruence variables. Finally, the present research demonstrates the centrality of the issue itself in understanding the outcomes of CSR messaging strategies.


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